

I applaud President Obama's announcement of an Executive Order and initiatives to update the United States' non-immigrant visa application process for overseas visitors. For many years, I have heard from my constituents and local businesses who are concerned about our nation's cumbersome and lengthy visa application process for overseas tourists and businesspeople. Their family members and friends, particularly from China, India, and Brazil, may wait over 100 days for a simple tourist visa interview. Travelers wishing to conduct business in the U.S. are similarly dissuaded. For instance, Chinese citizens must renew their U.S. visas annually. These frustrated potential visitors and businesspeople look elsewhere for their vacation and long-term business plans.

According to the Department of Commerce, inbound international travel currently supports 1.1 million U.S. jobs, and international travel is one of the nation's largest exports, contributing approximately \$134 billion to our economy in 2010. California enjoyed the economic benefits of 5.6 million overseas visitors (21% U.S. market share) in 2010. But over the past decade the U.S. lost an estimated \$606 billion due to our highly inefficient visa application approval process. My dear friend and former Secretary of Commerce, U.S. Ambassador to China Gary Locke, highlighted these problems during my recent visit to China and urged Congress to authorize visa reforms and provide adequate resources to alleviate these constraints.

To sensibly modernize our tourist and business visa application process while maintaining security standards, I have partnered with Representative Joe Heck of Nevada to support the Welcoming Business Travelers and Tourists to America Act (H.R. 3039) which would ensure that the traditionally cumbersome visa application process for overseas visitors is updated allowing more foreign travelers to visit the U.S. and boost our economy. We also worked together to garner support among our Congressional colleagues for a provision, ultimately included in the final Fiscal Year 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act, to help reduce the wait time for interviews for visa applicants.

H.R. 3039 would enable the Secretary of State to hire the necessary number of Foreign Service officers to achieve and maintain a maximum 12 day visa processing standard, conduct a two-year pilot program for processing non-immigrant visas via video conferencing, and submit a report to Congress on the demand projections for non-immigrant visas, specifically from China, India, and Brazil and on its short and long term plans to meet forecast demand. Additionally, it would require that non-immigrant visa demand projections and yearly visitor arrival projections

be compared and aligned, and it would allow the Secretary of State to modify agreements with countries to allow an increased visa validity period.

By fixing the visa system we will be able to attract 98 million more visitors and create 1.3 million U.S. jobs by 2020 while infusing \$859 billion into the U.S. economy. This will enable more travelers to visit Silicon Valley and the rest of our nation for business, family and pleasure. Our country cannot afford to miss out on this opportunity to welcome millions of international travelers and grow our economy.